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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2331
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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR XOX
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[¶1.](#) Mideast

[¶2.](#) Anti-Terrorism Efforts

Key stories in the media:

Maariv detailed what it says is the American peace plan for the Middle East: The immediate start of negotiations between the sides; a permanent-status agreement is the objective of the plan; the first

issue to be discussed: the permanent borders; the goal is to reach a compromise within nine months Q before the end of the settlement freeze; negotiations over the future of Jerusalem and the refugees; and President Obama is expected to place letters of guarantee in the hands of both parties. Maariv says that pressure on the Arab League is likely during the implementation of the plan.

Israel Radio quoted PA President Mahmoud Abbas's spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh as saying that the PA will be able to renew negotiations with Israel only when the latter commits itself (among other conditions) to withdrawing to the 1967 borders. Yesterday The Jerusalem Post cited the prediction of a PA official over the weekend that peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians could be relaunched as early as February following encouraging signs from the Israeli Government. The Jerusalem Post quoted PM Benjamin Netanyahu as saying in a closed door meeting yesterday that he has no intention of restarting negotiations with the Palestinians on the basis of the pre-Six Day War lines. The PM also characterized as inaccurate media reports that he has recently shown flexibility regarding negotiations over Jerusalem and the refugees. Leading media Palestinian Abbas will meet with Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el-Sheikh today to discuss Israel's latest offers to renew talks with the PA. The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that while Abbas continues to refuse to sit down and talk with PM Netanyahu, he is in telephone contact with President Shimon Peres, who even recently tried to talk him out of resigning. The Jerusalem Post quoted Peres as saying in an interview with the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun on Thursday that he hoped that Abbas would run in the next PA election, and that his advice to the PA president was that "winners don't quit, and quitters don't win." HaQaretz reported that the U.S. administration is making efforts to convince Abbas to agree to the resumption of peace talks through a series of goodwill gestures on the part of Israel -- including the release of prisoners and the transfer of territory under Israel's security control (Area B) to Palestinian security control (Area A). Abbas has thus far refused to renew the talks as long as Israel refuses to institute a complete freeze on West Bank settlement building that would include East Jerusalem.

The media reported that IAF planes attacked three targets in Gaza overnight Friday and on Saturday morning, a day after Palestinians fired Grad-type rockets at Netivot. Some media reported that Hamas threatens to retaliate.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, fearing violent resistance, the IDF plans to deploy large security forces to demolish homes that have been built illegally since the government-imposed moratorium on Jewish construction in the West Bank took effect in late November. Media reported that yesterday settlers held a one-day strike and demonstrated in front of the Prime Minister's Office.

Yesterday HaQaretz reported that on Thursday FM Avigdor Lieberman chastised 150 or so Israeli diplomats for what he described as their tendency to overly placate their host nations.

Citing The New York Times, HaQaretz reported that the American intelligence community is reassessing its view of the Iranian nuclear program, veering from its previous assessment that it published in 2007. Yediot cited The New York Times that Israel has been persuaded that this is a window of opportunity for a diplomatic move involving sanctions on Iran.

HaQaretz reported that the U.S. has recently signed major arms deals with several Arab states and that Israeli officials have expressed concern at the scope and content of the agreements. Among the recipients of the advanced arms included in the agreements are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE. The shipments are to include anti-ship and antitank missiles as well as so-called smart and bunker-busting bombs. HaQaretz reported that in December the Pentagon notified Congress of several arms deals it wanted to carry out. The details of the deals were also posted on the Pentagon website. In its report to Congress the Department of Defense noted that none of the deals would "alter the military balance in the region." According to the Pentagon report to Congress, no arms deals with Israel have taken place since President Barack Obama took office.

HaQaretz reported that the U.S. will assist Israel in developing and

funding the Arrow 3 missile defense system.

Yediot quoted Gregg Rickman, formerly the Secretary of State's Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, as saying following the closure of the U.S Embassy in Sanaa that the last remaining Jews in Yemen should be rescued immediately.

HaQaretz quoted Supreme Court Justice Elyakim Rubinstein as saying yesterday: QThe peace agreement with Jordan is not as warm as we would have liked, nor as the agreement stipulates.O Rubinstein, who was one of architects of the peace treaty with Jordan, was speaking in a synagogue in the settlement of Efrat. On a different issue The Jerusalem Post reported that Canada has refused a Jordanian request to hand over the historic Dead Sea Scrolls, currently on loan to Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum. The newspaper quoted Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor as saying: QThe Dead Sea Scrolls are an intrinsic part of Jewish heritage and religion. The scrolls have no relation to Jordan or the Jordanian people.

The Jerusalem Post quoted NetanyahuOs former chief of staff, Yechiel Leiter, as saying that he is Qnot interestedO in serving as consul-general in New York. Leiter has been mentioned as the PMOs candidate for the post.

I. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

II. QWill Obama Attack Israel?

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (1/4): QAs far as Israel is concerned] what is important is that Obama and his entourage have learned two things. One of them is that bashing Israel is politically costly. American public opinion is very strongly pro-Israel. Congress is as friendly to Israel as ever. For an administration that is more conscious of its future reelection campaign than any previous one, holding onto Jewish voters and ensuring Jewish donations is very important. There will almost certainly not be a visit of Obama to Israel this year; he'll wait until it will do him some good at the polls (which is a good thing, since the less attention he pays to this issue the less harm he'll do). The other point is that the administration has seen that bashing Israel doesn't get it anywhere. For one thing, the current Israeli government won't give in easily and is very adept at protecting its country's interests. This administration has a great deal of trouble being tough with anyone. If in fact the Palestinians and Arabs were eager to make a deal and energetic about supporting other U.S. policies, the administration might well be tempted to press for an arrangement that largely ignored Israeli interests. But this is not the case. It is the Palestinians who refuse even to come to the negotiating table -- and that is unlikely to change quickly or easily. Arab states won't lift a finger to help the U.S. on Iran, Iraq, or Arab-Israeli issues. So why bother?

II. QBetween Decades

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/1): QOn the first morning of the new decade there is no euphoria in Israel. Our economic and security strength creates a certain kind of self-confidence. But the challenges are unprecedented -- the Iranian nuclear project, the missile threat, the occupation, the loss of legitimacy, the leadership crisis, the governability crisis, the social woes, and the collapse of education. In an amazing way, the previous decade did not yield any substantial response to any of these challenges. It gave us a good life for the moment without having to contend seriously with our basic problems. The new decade will not be able to continue this regime. The processes that are eroding Israel's support walls have gone too far. Unless there is a sobering up and a change of

direction, the next 10 years could be more difficult than the 10 preceding ones. To avoid waking up despondent on January 1, 2020, we have to wake up now.

III. QTwo Hats

Contributor and settler Elyakim Haetzni wrote in Yediot Aharonot (1/3): QRabbi Meir Avshalom Hai was murdered by several of the leaders of the El-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. This terror organization, which publicly accepted responsibility for the attack is, like Tanzim, essentially part of Fatah, which is led by Abu Mazen. He inherited this structure from his predecessor Yasser Arafat.... A simple question arises: why is it that those figures, who agonize over every clause in our agreements with the PLO, choose to ignore the clearly stated articles in the fourth appendix of the interim agreement, which provides Israel with criminal jurisdiction over acts committed in the QterritoriesQ against Israeli citizens as well as the right to demand the extradition of those suspected of having committed such acts, such as the fourth assassin of Rabbi Hai? The reason is that already in the jolly days of Oslo, the Palestinians announced that they would never extradite a Palestinian to Israel, and all Israeli governments have accepted this blatant breach of such a vital clause in the agreement. Such scandalous behavior continues also under the leadership of the man who devised the slogan QtheyQll give -- theyQll getQ [Netanyahu].... Lately we have also been hearing our security services praise the Palestinian forces for their cooperation in their war on terror -- seemingly good news. They neglect, however, to tell us precisely whom they are fighting against, are they also fighting the El-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades?.... For there is nothing advantageous about their fighting Hamas and Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. As far as they see it, this is not a war on terror, but rather a bloody struggle for power, a gang war, to which they have successfully recruited the IDF.

IV. KadimaQs Future

Former Meretz leader, former Justice Minister, and chief Israeli promoter of the Geneva Initiative, Yossi Beilin, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (1/4): QThe assessment that was prevalent after the elections, according to which Kadima was a ruling party that was incapable of existing in the opposition, was disproved, at least temporarily.... Kadima, which won 28 seats only due to the left wing, can only exist if it expresses the aspirations of the left wing. The split in the party has been postponed for a while, but it is imprinted in the nature of the contradictions that characterize it. A centrifugal process will make it a much smaller Knesset faction. This appears already now as an irreversible process. Livni can save her party in the next elections only if she decides to continue the big bang by making Kadima into a center-left party that replaces the Labor Party. Otherwise Kadima will disappear from the map, just like Dash [allied to Menachem Begin in the 1970s] and Shinui [during the past decade].

I2. Anti-Terrorism Efforts:

Block Quotes:

II. QIslamic Terror, Remember?

Columnist and former intelligence officer Amos Gilboa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/4): QAfter September 11, 2001, President Bush proclaimed a third world war against terror, which would last for many years.... Obama ... removed the word Qterror from his lexicon: in all his programmatic speeches over the past year -- in Ankara, in Cairo, at the U.N. General Assembly, in his address to Congress -- the word QterrorQ did not appear. He knows no Qwar against terrorQ... The big question at the start of the new year is this: will the Obama administration change its basic attitude to Islamic terror and start viewing it as a challenge of the first order, which requires to be placed high on the United StatesQ priority list, or will it more or less continue its current basic attitude and fear to utter the word QterrorQ?.... One of the key issues at the beginning of this decade is that the world powers have ceased to effectively influence world affairs. There no longer is a Qworld orderQ.... Will the Obama administration succeed in

forming a Qworld orderQ with the other powers (Russia, China, India, the European Union, Japan, and Brazil)?

II. Q443 + 253 = 9/11

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/4): Q[Eric] Holder, [Condoleezza] Rice, and Obama, as well as Carter and Clinton, who were both governors of southern states before becoming president, have copied a simplistic notion of the civil rights struggle involving American blacks and implemented it in U.S. foreign and defense policy. Racist white mayors and state troopers harassing innocent black pedestrians and motorists? That's exactly what Muslims on Flight 253 and Palestinians on Route 443 must be spared, even if the world blows up. The intrusive inconvenience to those belonging to high-risk groups, meaning those who create risks and not those exposed to them, should create a measure of deterrence and difficulty for terrorists. The price of misguided lenience in the other direction is much higher.

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